

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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The Sunday before Theophany (01.15.2023.)

(Mark 1:1-8)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” (KJV)

Repentance is essential in the Christian believer's life. Repentance is necessary throughout life from the time personal sin is realized and personally acknowledged.

God's Holy Church encourages and provides for the confession of sins when the believer chooses to repent. St. Mark's Gospel serves as a record of St. John the Baptist being a preacher of repentance.

Holy St. John was humble in his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. St. John pointed to Jesus Christ as baptizing with the Holy Spirit. St. Mark's Gospel is rich in content regarding St. John's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believers interested in moving away from sin and becoming more faithful to Jesus Christ will heed the importance of repentance. Love for Jesus Christ and the desire for inner peace motivates believers to repent.

Hunger in the soul is satisfied when Jesus Christ fills the heart, mind and soul. Peace fills the heart, mind and soul when repentance occurs. St. John the Baptist serves to inspire believers seeking to repent.

Jesus Christ's Baptism in the Jordan by St. John comes to mind today as the Feast of Theophany draws near. The honor bestowed upon St. John to participate in Jesus' Baptism is a singular honor of lasting significance.

The Church honors St. John down through the centuries. Believers seek St. John's intercession before the Lord at all times. Miracles are constantly attributed to St. John by fervent believers.

Churches around the world bear the name of St. John the Baptist. Individuals are regularly named after St. John the Baptist. Families and individuals celebrate St. John as their patronal saint.

Repentance is worthy of consideration throughout the Christian life. Every person is a sinner. Every person says or does something that is offensive and contrary to the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance is the way to put sin behind and to begin anew in Christ. Being able to repent and begin anew in Christ are reasons to be grateful. Appreciative believers take time to thank Jesus for His mercy, forgiveness and love.

Newness in Christ begins at baptism. Joy in Jesus Christ permeates the whole being. Baptism changes the person's identity forever.

The journey to God's Kingdom continues when the believer repents and is renewed in Christ. God's Holy Church fosters and encourages repentance. The Church nourishes and guides the believer in the journey to the Kingdom.

A foretaste of God's Kingdom is experienced in the Holy Mysteries of the Church. Eternal life in the Kingdom awaits each faithful believer. Repentance keeps the believer on the road to the Kingdom.

Thank God for the faithfulness of St. John the Baptist. Thank God for the humility demonstrated by St. John. St. John's understanding of his relationship with Jesus Christ merits deep consideration.

Humility is exemplified in St. John. Humility is Personified in Jesus Christ taking on human flesh. Humility in the Christian life is always desirable and appropriate as the way of life.

The Nativity of Jesus Christ is fresh in believers' minds. The Baptism of Jesus Christ will be celebrated soon. This is a joyous time in God's Holy Church. Joy in Christ exceeds understanding.

Repentance refreshes joy in the believer's life. Repentance lifts the weight of sin through Jesus Christ's forgiveness. The mind is cleared and the weight of sin is removed when repentance takes place.

St. John the Baptist brings Jesus Christ to the believer's mind. St. John the Baptist has a permanent place on the iconostasis of each church. The Church honors and always remembers St. John.

On this Sunday before Theophany keeping St. John at the forefront of our thoughts is entirely appropriate. St. John remains inseparable with thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Holy Church prescribes the current Gospel to be proclaimed every year. Attentive believers learn more about St. John and his relationships with Jesus Christ with each passing year.

While the mind functions well, learning about St. John and his relationship with Jesus is always beneficial. Thank God for the Church preserving and honoring the memory of St. John. Thank God for the opportunity to repent.

The Sunday before Theophany. January 2/January 15, 2023. Venerable Seraphim of Sarov; St. Sylvester, Bishop of Rome. Forefeast of Theophany. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nikolai of Zhicha

1. THE THEOPHANY [EPIPHANY] OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

When our Lord reached thirty years from His physical birth, He began His teaching and salvific work. He Himself signified this "beginning of the beginning" by His baptism in the Jordan River. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: "The beginning of the world is water; the beginning of the Gospel is the Jordan." At the time of the Baptism of the Lord in water, the mystery was declared to the world--the mystery that was prophesied in the Old Testament; the mystery that was known only in fables in ancient Egypt and India--the mystery of the Divine Holy Trinity. The Father was revealed to the sense of hearing, the Spirit was revealed to the sense of sight, and the Son was revealed to the sense of touch. The Father uttered His witness about the Son, the Son was baptized in the water, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovered above the water. When John the Baptist bore witness to Christ, saying: *Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* (John 1:29), and when John immersed and baptized the Lord in the Jordan, the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation were shown. That is to say, the Lord took upon Himself the sins of mankind and died under them (immersion) and rose again (the coming out of the water); and we must die to the old sinful man and rise again as cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is the Savior and this is the path of salvation. The Feast of the Theophany is also called the Feast of Illumination. The event in the Jordan River illuminates us by manifesting God to us as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. That is one way that we are illumined. And the second way is that every one of us through baptism in water is illumined, in that we become adopted by the Father of Lights through the merits of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.

HYMN OF PRAISE **THE HOLY TRINITY**

O Holy Lord, holy in creating:
All that Thou makest by Thy Word, Thou doest consecrate by the Spirit.

O Mighty Lord, mighty in suffering:
For the sake of the world Thou goest to Thy death; for the sake of the world Thou dost
resurrect.

O Immortal Lord, with our voices we hymn Thee:
Father, Son, Holy Spirit--God, have mercy on us!
The Father, Who appeared over Jordan as a Voice;
The Spirit, Who hovered as a milk-white Dove;
The Son, Who by the Prophet John was baptized:
Three rays of Light, one Light shone.

O Trinity manifested, with our voices we hymn Thee:
Father, Son, Holy Spirit--God, have mercy on us!

REFLECTION

At one time the fables of the heretics plagued the Church of God, and now the Church is plagued by the fables of the apostates from God. By perseverance in the Faith, by diligence in prayer, by confession of the Faith, and even by martyrdom for the Faith, the Church has remained undefeated. Only by these methods will these new plagues be defeated. The Church of God, the Vessel of Divine Truth, will triumph in the end: *The swords of the enemy have utterly failed* (Psalm 9:6). Blessed Clement of Alexandria, speaking about heretics who left the Church, said: "He who has fallen into heresy travels through an arid desert, abandoning the One True God. Alienated from God, he seeks water in dry places, he gathers barren fruit with his hands, and enters into an uninhabited and thirsty land." This also can be said today about the many theoreticians and inventors of scientific hypotheses who are led by their imaginations and not by the truth of God.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the event of the Baptism of the Lord:

1. His humble coming to the Jordan River, unknown to all except John;
2. His immersion in the water, the hovering of the Dove over Him, and the Voice from on High.

HOMILY

on the mystery of the Divine Trinity

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit and the water and the blood: and these three are together" (I John 5: 7-8).

When we read Holy Scripture, we should be alert to keep an eye on every word. To the rapid reader, for example, this distinction which the Evangelist draws between the Heavenly Trinity and the earthly trinity will not become apparent. Concerning the Heavenly Trinity, he says, *and these three are one*; and concerning the earthly trinity, he says, *and these three are together*. There is an enormous difference between "being one" and "being together." The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are One, whereas the spirit, the water and the blood are only together and are not one. Even enemies could be together, but are not one. All the people on earth are together, but they are not one. Water and blood constitute the body, and the spirit is the spirit. *For the flesh has desires against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh* (Galatians 5:17). They are not one, but they are still together. When man dies, the union is broken and ceases to exist. Blood and water go to one side, and the spirit goes to another side. However, the Persons of the Divine Trinity in the heavens are not only together, but They are also One. There is also another trinity in the inner heaven of man which should be not only a unity but a oneness, so that man may be blessed in this world and in the other world. That is the union of the mind, heart and will. As long as these three are only in togetherness, man will be at war with himself and with the Heavenly Trinity. However, when these three become one, so that none rules and none is enslaved, then man becomes filled with *the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding* (Philippians 4:7), that surpasses man's every word, every explanation, every fear and every sorrow. Then the small heaven in man begins to resemble that great heaven of God, and the "image and likeness of God" become apparent in man. O Triune God, help us to at least resemble those who resemble Thee. **To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.**

Services this Week

- ❖ *Wednesday (January 18th) Holy Theopemptus and Theonas – Holy Gross Day, 09:30 Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ *Thursday (January 19th) The Holy Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ, 09:30 Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ *Friday (January 20th) Synaxis of The Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, 09:30 Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ *SUNDAY (January 22nd) - Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy*

Donations January 6-8, 2023

Offering - \$ 6,594.00 Candles - \$212.00
Dues - \$300 Donations - \$425

Donations

Donations - \$425
Diamond's Funeral Home - \$1,000

Building Fund

In Memory of Andrew Grisin from Steve Purich - \$25
In Memory of Peter Calaboyis from Steve Purich - \$25
Eli Cvijanovich - \$100

Large Candles

In Memory of Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich
In Memory of Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp
In Memory of Vinny Czubak from Jeannette Czubak
In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Kathleen McDowell
In Memory of Damenja & Lazo Gjurich from Diane and Dan Tomak
In Memory of Amelia & Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2023
KOLO MEETING - FOLLOWING DIVINE LITURGY

On Sunday, January 22nd, following Divine Liturgy, everyone is invited to Father Dragan and Popadija Vladanka's home in celebration of their Slava, Sveti Jovan.

**Please feel free to take your Poinsettia
And any extras that you would like.
Garden Haven was generous in donating 50 poinsettias
and S.E.A.D.S donated a few extra.
Everyone help themselves!**

**A very special thank you to all of the following who
donated poinsettias for the altar:**

- ⊗ Diane V. Tomak IMO Damjena Gjurich & Bosa
Vuckovich
- ⊗ Michelle Pagano-Goas IMO Olga Pagano (Mother)
- ⊗ Gojko, Rose, & Kristina Marinkovich IMO Deceased
Family Members
- ⊗ Eli Cvijanovich IMO Parents Ilija & Martha Cvijanovich
 - ⊗ Carole McAllister IMO Nick & Sara Davich
 - ⊗ Danica Wess IMO Buncich Family & Dick Wess
 - ⊗ Joanne & Pete Todorich IMO Nikola, Milka
& Nick Jr. Todorich
- ⊗ Joanne Uzelac & Linda Freidhoff IMO Donald Uzelac
and Wayne & Patricia Freidhoff
- ⊗ Suzette & Richard Gardenhour IMO Grisin, Bozic &
Gardenhour Families
- ⊗ John & Patricia Pavich IMO Deceased Family Members
 - ⊗ Joseph Golden IMO Golden & Vuchev Families
 - ⊗ Jencine Campagna IMO Ray Taylor
 - ⊗ Adam Lichvar IMO The Dudukovich Family
- ⊗ Evelyn Walet IMO Father Sam Vuckovich & Aunt Mimi
- ⊗ Donna Zimmerman IMO Nickolas, Mary, David and
Deborah Miller
 - ⊗ Joe Bartis IMO Connie Bartis
 - ⊗ Helene Gleason IMO Bosa & Lazo Vuckovich
- ⊗ Richard Kondas IMO Parents Amelia & Joseph Kondas
 - ⊗ St. Nicholas Kolo IMO Deceased Kolo Members
 - ⊗ Patricia Niel Buncich, Niel & Wess Families
- ⊗ Cameron & Linda Palmer IMO Eva Johnson/Visnich
 - ⊗ Garden Haven
 - ⊗ SEADS